

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4606

September 1, 2022

Joel Baker
Fire Chief
Austin Fire Department
4201 Ed Bluestein Blvd
Austin, TX 78744

Chief Baker,

It has come to my attention that the Austin Fire Department allegedly fired volunteer lead chaplain Dr. Andrew Fox last December in retribution for exercising his First Amendment rights. The complaints raised in the [lawsuit](#) are justly concerning. If true, these allegations create a troubling standard for the exercise of free speech and freedom of religion and are likely unconstitutional.

First Amendment jurisprudence is clear. The Federal Constitution prohibits the government from conditioning a benefit on the relinquishment of any First Amendment right, protects individuals' rights to be free from viewpoint-based discrimination, and prohibits the government from imposing retribution based on what a citizen chooses to think, say or publish, in addition to other virtues.

As a member of Congress representing the Austin area, I respectfully request answers to the following questions by September 8, 2022:

1. Was Dr. Andrew Fox removed from his position as lead chaplain because of his religious opinions expressed in his personal blog?
2. Is the Austin Fire Department currently reviewing the employment status of any employees for their personal deeply held beliefs including but not limited to boys playing in girls' sports, traditional marriage, transgenderism, or political affiliation?
3. Is it the belief of the Austin Fire Department that the removal of Dr. Fox was not a violation of the First Amendment?
4. Does the Austin Fire Department consider religious beliefs or expression when making hiring and firing decisions?

Thank you for your attention to this issue.



Chip Roy
Member of Congress